

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-20 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7126

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT AU PRINCE 1786

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, EAID, HA

SUBJECT: HAITIAN PRESIDENT'S REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY BRIDGING
ASSISTANCE

1. FON MIN RAYMOND SUMMONED ME OCTOBER 15 TO PRESENT EMERGENCY REQUEST FOR US ASSISTANCE IN TEMPORARY BRIDGING OF ESTERE RIVER. HE DESCRIBED THIS AS AN EMERGENCY REQUEST IN VIEW OF RECENT RAIN AND FLOOD DAMAGE WHICH HAS CUT OFF ALL TRAFFIC INCLUDING SUPPLY OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS FROM THE NORTH.

2. AS HE OFTEN DOES, HE CALLED PRESIDENT ON TELEPHONE AND PRESIDENT REITERATED URGENCY OF REQUEST AND EXPRESSED HOPE WE COULD PROVIDE BRIDGING ON EMERGENCY BASIS AND SUBSEQUENTLY MAKE IT A GIFT TO GOH.

3. I TOLD RAYMOND I WOULD PASS ON PRESIDENT'S REQUEST AND POINTED OUT THIS WAS A VERY TECHNICAL SUBJECT AND I WOULD HAVE TO CONSULT AID REP AND DATT TO GET AN IDEA OF WHAT WAS INVOLVED. I ALSO TOLD HIM THAT I COULD OFFER NO ASSURANCE THAT ANYTHING COULD BE DONE ABOUT IT.

4. AID REP IS CANVASSING AVAILABLE INFORMATION ON ESTERE BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION WHICH IS A LONGSTANDING PROJECT. AID/W WILL RECOGNIZE THIS IS SAME PROJECT ON
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WHICH AMBASSADOR KNOX WAS ALSO SUMMONED BY GOH ON ONE

OCCASION. IT WAS CONCLUDED AT THAT TIME THAT BRIDGE WAS IRREPARABLE, WHICH IS STILL THE CASE, THAT REPLACEMENT WAS BEING ENGINEERED FOR INCLUSION IN NEW NORTH ROAD PROJECT (IBRD) AND UNTIL CONSTRUCTION THEREOF ACCOMPLISHED IN FIRST HALF OF CY 1974 TRAFFIC TO AND FROM NORTH WOULD CONTINUE TO BE DIVERTED VIA DESSALINES, AS IT HAS BEEN FOR LAST SEVERAL MONTHS, SINCE ESTERE BRIDGE WAS CLOSED TO ALL TRAFFICE BECAUSE OF IMMINENT DANGER OF COLLAPSE. WE ASSUME THAT RENEWED FOCUS ON THIS DERIVES FROM FACT THAT DESSALINES DETOUR ROAD HAS BEEN ENTIRELY IMPASSABLE IN RECENT DAYS DUE TO COMBINATION OF HEAVY RAIN AND HEAVY TRUCK TRAFFIC WHICH HAS BEEN FORCED TO USE IT.

5. IT APPEARS TO US THAT EMERGENCY THAT NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED IMMEDIATELY IS REHABILITATION OF DETOUR.

6. DATT IS GOING TO INSPECT THE AREA TUESDAY AND I PLAN TO ACCOMPANY HIM IF POSSIBLE.

7. COMMENT: GOH HAS OBVIOUSLY REACTED TO POLITICAL PRESSURES RESULTING FROM CUTTING OFF OF TRAFFIC TO NORTH. AS PART OF OUR STUDY OF THIS REQUEST WE SHALL TRY TO DETERMINE TO WHAT EXTENT, IF ANY, GOH HAS CANVASSED ITS OWN PUBLIC WORKS RESOURCES AND WHAT THE VIEWS OF INNER ROUTE (IBRD) CONSULTANT ARE. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE BEST THING THE GOH CAN DO IS STILL TO CONCENTRATE ON REPAIRING THE DETOUR PENDING COMPLETION OF THE NEW BRIDGE. WE SHALL ALSO SOLICIT EXPERT ADVICE OF SANCTUARY SEABEE ADVANCE TEAM DUE NOVEMBER 7.

8. ACTION REQUESTED: THAT THIS REPORT BE CONSIDERED SIMPLY AS INFORMATIVE AND BACKGROUND PENDING SUBSEQUENT RECOMMENDATION FOLLOWING EMBASSY'S FURTHER EXAMINATION OF THIS PROBLEM.
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